

REMARKS

In light of the amendments to the claims noted above and remarks to follow, reconsideration and allowance of the above-referenced application is respectfully requested. The Examiner is thanked for allowing claims 29, 31-45, 47, 62-66 and 80-82 and considering claims 7-11, 13-17, 27, and 28 allowable if rewritten in independent form.

I. STATUS OF CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 1-29, 31-45, 47, 49-76, and 80-82 are in the present application. Claims 1, 7, 11, 14, 17, 27, 67 and 71 have been amended.

All dependencies from rejected claims have been removed from objected claims 7-11, 13-17, 27 and 28. It is believed the claims 7-11, 13-17, 27 and 28 are now in conditions for allowance.

No new matter is added by this amendment.

It is submitted that these claims are patentably distinct from the prior art cited by the Examiner, and that these claims are in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112. The amendments and remarks herein are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §§ 101, 102, 103 or 112; but rather the amendments and remarks are made simply for clarification and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled. Support for the amended recitations in the claims is found throughout the specification and from the pending claims.

II. 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 AND 103 REJECTIONS

In the Advisory Action dated June 20, 2003, the following claims remain rejected: claims 67 and 70 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,561,219 to Nishizawa et al. (“Nishizawa”); claims 1-6, 12, and 18-26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 2,997,973 to Hawthorne et al. (“Hawthorne”) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,421,128 to Sharpless et al. (“Sharpless”); claims 68 and 69 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(b) as allegedly being unpatentable over Nishizawa in view Hawthorne; and claims 71-74 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Hawthorne in view of GB 826,301 to Ashton. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The amendments to claims 1, 67 and 71 along the lines suggested by the Examiner in the June 20, 2003 Advisory Action renders the rejections moot. Specifically, claim 1 has been amended as follows: “said stiffening beam being integral with said tubular structure and subject to pressurization and depressurization independent of a pressure of the vessel”. In addition, “or fluidisable materials” has been deleted from claim 67. Also, claim 71 has been amended as follows: “said stiffening beam being maintained within a sleeve woven seamless with said tubular structure along a length thereof to reduce drag and subject to pressurization and depressurization”.

As for claims 68 and 69, Hawthorne is relied upon solely to meet the recitation “means for filling and emptying comprises a tube woven seamless with said tubular structures allowing fluid communication therebetween.” (Claims 68 and 69) However, since dependent claims 68 and 69 inherits the limitations of independent claim 67, the rejection based on the additional reference to Hawthorne should be withdrawn in view of the foregoing amendment to claim 67.

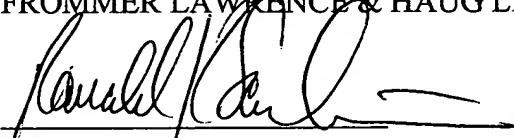
Consequently, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Sections 102 and 103 rejections are warranted and respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

By this Amendment, the instant claims should be allowed; and this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application, withdrawal of the rejections, and prompt issuance of the Notice of Allowance are, therefore, all earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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